

UCLA Red Lays Ouster Proceedings to Racism

Black Teacher Says Stand for 'Liberation' Made Regents Act

BY KENNETH REICH

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Angela Davis — the assistant UCLA philosophy professor ordered dismissed because she is a member of the Communist Party—said Tuesday that racism as much as communism underlies the move to oust her.

Miss Davis, who is black, announced that she will ask for a hearing by a faculty committee on the dismissal decision made by the UC Board of Regents last Friday. She will retain her office and salary at UCLA pending the hearing.

She added that she plans no court action challenging the constitutionality of the planned dismissal until after the hearing.

Breaking her public silence in a news conference and a series of interviews, the 25-year-old Miss Davis said her role in the "struggle for black liberation" had marked her as a special target for the regents. She accused them of "fascist encroachments" on her rights.

The young professor identified herself as a member of the Che-Lumumba Club, an all-black collective of the Communist Party of Southern California. She added she was formerly active in the Black Panther Party.

Milder Than Colleague

Miss Davis did not go as far on the racism charge as Robert Singleton, acting director of the Afro-American Studies Center at UCLA, who joined her at the news conference.

Singleton, after declaring that "racism is the overriding issue in this case" and that Miss Davis' dismissal is being prompted by "her affiliation with militant black organizations," added:

"It can be documented that there are white Communists teaching at the university who are not being harassed as she is being harassed now."

Asked, however, to document his statement, Singleton declined, telling his questioner, "What would happen if I did document it, you and I both know."

A high UCLA administrative source commented later that any implication that known white Com-



Angela Davis

Times photo

munists are being allowed to teach at the university is false.

"I know of no member of the Communist Party employed at UCLA with the exception of Angela Davis," the administrator said.

In a 35-minute interview after the news conference, Miss Davis said at some points that her black militant activities had a lot to do with her dismissal. However, at another point she speculated that if she had been willing to conceal her Communist Party membership, the regents would not have taken action against her.

Miss Davis supported Singleton's statement about other Communists teaching at the university and said there was a tacit "right to remain obscure" recognized by university authorities.

"That's nonsense," the UCLA administrator commented later.

Miss Davis was accompanied during the interview by a young black woman identifying herself as Kendra Alexander who said she was in charge of youth work in the Southland for the Communist Party.

Just before the interview, Miss Davis was asked if she could be seen alone. She had not had time to respond when a man who did not identify himself insisted that at least one of his group of four persons sit in on the interview.

The man explained that "we're all in this together" and said it would

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be better if Miss Davis did not speak alone. She agreed.

Mrs. Alexander and Miss Davis said that their Che-Lumumba Communist youth group was "very intensely involved in all levels of black activity" in Los Angeles. They did not elaborate.

Miss Davis, who had acknowledged membership in the Communist Party in a letter to UCLA Chancellor Charles E. Young on Sept. 5, said in the interview that she had belonged to the party about a year and a half. During that time, she has gradually eased out of her activities in the Black Panthers in Los Angeles and San Diego, she said.

Miss Davis said she had believed in Marxism long before joining the party. Her interest in it dates to her days as a child in Birmingham, Ala., when she was friendly with many other children whose parents were in the Communist Party, she said.

In the course of the interview, Miss Davis denied a report published in the San Francisco Examiner that she was a member of the Students for a Democratic Society. She said she did not believe many black people were active in the SDS.

Miss Davis said that no one had asked her and she saw no reason to volunteer mention of her Communist Party membership when she was recruited for a two-year, non-tenure appointment on the UCLA faculty last spring.

She insisted that belonging to the party would in no way impair her ability to teach in an unbiased manner.

At Tuesday's news conference, it was made clear that the Angela Davis case will be a major issue at UCLA for a long time and will afford militant groups a frequent chance to be heard.

Long Delay Seen

The hearing process which now begins is likely to delay matters more than a month, and there is the prospect of lengthy litigation in the courts after that.

Appearing with Singleton and Miss Davis at the news conference was Prof. David Kaplan, assistant chairman of the philosophy department, and temporary head of an ad hoc committee formed on campus to fight Miss Davis' ouster.

Kaplan delivered a statement which was mainly a defense of academic freedom in the case. But most of the attention at the news conference was focused on Singleton and Miss Davis.

In her prepared statement, Miss Davis said, "The regents seem intent on meting out punishments which concur with the fascist tendencies of the times . . .

"Let there be no doubt—my stand is forthright," Miss Davis' statement continued. "As a black woman, my politics and political affiliation are bound up with and flow from participation in my people's struggle for liberation, and with the fight of oppressed people all over the world against American imperialism.

"The Fascist encroachments of boards of regents, governors and presidents upon the rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States are designed to perpetuate and increase that oppression . . ."

About 20 persons in the room strongly applauded Miss Davis' statement when she had finished reading it. Among those applauding was Prof. Donald Kalish, the Philosophy Department chairman who was chiefly involved in hiring her.

Earlier, a student had handed out a resolution adopted Monday night by the Student Legislative Council, a principal arm of the UCLA student government. It urged that the regents rescind their action ordering the dismissal of Miss Davis and described the action as "undeniably racist."